



# Great Grants

## Canine Teams Provide Vital Service Following Disaster

After disaster strikes, time is a critical factor in rescue and recovery efforts. Thanks to the canine teams trained by the National Disaster Search Dog Foundation (SDF), rescue workers across the country can minimize search time to find victims trapped in disaster wreckage. A recent grant from the Oklahoma City Community Foundation has helped the organization expand its reach.

In 1995, retired school teacher Wilma Melville and her search dog Murphy were deployed to help the search and rescue efforts in Oklahoma City following the bombing of the Murrah Federal Building. At the time they were one of only 15 certified disaster search dog teams in the United States. This experience convinced Wilma that more certified canine teams were needed and in 1996 she founded SDF.

The nonprofit organization recruits rescued dogs from animal shelters who are then professionally trained and paired with firefighters and other first responders at no cost to the fire departments and disaster response agencies. Additionally, SDF ensures lifetime care for every dog in the program. SDF currently has 76 FEMA-certified canine search teams across the country with nine teams based in Oklahoma and 21 additional teams in training.

Since its establishment, SDF has been deployed 77 times to assist with search and rescue efforts including deployments for the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center in 2001, Hurricane Katrina in 2005, the earthquake in Haiti in 2010 and the tsunami and earthquakes in Japan in 2011. The SDF teams were also deployed to Joplin, Mo. and Oklahoma City to help search for survivors of the devastating tornadoes that struck the areas in May 2011.

In 2010, the Oklahoma City Community Foundation awarded a \$20,000 grant to SDF from the Community Infrastructure Fund, which supports administrative needs and professional training for emergency response during a community disaster.

“The support of the Oklahoma City Community Foundation was vital in helping SDF recruit and train five canine disaster search teams to serve Oklahoma City and the state,” says Wilma. “Bringing these teams to Oklahoma was a homecoming for SDF.”

This grant was made possible by donors who wanted to support emergency services in times of natural and man-made disasters. To discuss how you can help your community, please contact us at 405/235-5603 or visit [www.occf.org](http://www.occf.org).

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Top: The five new Oklahoma canine disaster search teams with a SDF trainer.

Middle: An SDF team at work following the 2010 Haiti earthquake.

Bottom: SDF founder Wilma Melville (seated) with search teams.

Photos courtesy of SDF

# Helping Our Community

*Through a Great Grant.*

Since 1996, the National Disaster Search Dog Foundation (SDF) has been helping to strengthen disaster response efforts by providing professionally trained canine search teams to rescue workers at no cost. With 76 certified search teams across the country and nine based in Oklahoma, the nonprofit provides a vital, life-saving service in the wake of disaster.

The Oklahoma City Community Foundation was pleased to award a grant in 2010 to support SDF and its ongoing canine training program through our Community Infrastructure Fund. This fund was established to support emergency professionals with training and resources to help strengthen a community's ability to respond to a disaster. If you are interested in learning how you can make a difference in your community, please contact us 405/235-5603 or visit [www.occf.org](http://www.occf.org).



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